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Letters to the Editor

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Dr. Nash,

I read with interest your lead piece on a National Quality Report in the latest *Health Policy Newsletter* ("The Vision for a National Quality Report," September 2001). The notion of such a report seems desirable enough, but I see several big problems with it. The first – and biggest – is the definition of quality itself. You note that recommendation ten calls for several versions of such a report for different stakeholders – but quality is not the right subject for such a report if it is to be of value to the purchaser – employers.

Quality is a means but not an end for them. It must lead to better functionality and well being, which in turn result in measurable gains in productivity, for the mass of employers to get excited about a report card. Getting providers and health plans aligned with the growing interest of employers in health and productivity suggests a rather different set of measures than whatever could be agreed on nationally today – a new dashboard for a new model of health care system aimed at producing workplace rather than just medical outcomes.

This, not surprising to you, I'm sure, is what our Institute for Health and Productivity Management is all about: Without workplace outcomes of larger value than what's being measured today in the world of quality (i.e., HEDIS), the employer-based system is at risk – with an alternative that will make everyone unhappy.

Sean Sullivan

Institute for Health and Productivity Management
Scottsdale, AZ

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Dear Dr. Nash,

My wife, a pediatrician, just handed me the June edition of your *Health Policy Newsletter*. Involved in a medically-related startup, she thought I'd be interested in your comments regarding "A Health Care Tipping Point?"

I offer two comments: First, I think you're completely on point regarding the way in which Gladwell's theories can (ought to) be employed in medicine. The profession exists in the real world and needs to recognize, learn and employ non-medical, real world strategies and tactics to advance its own ends.

Second, you may be interested in a book by Emanuel Rosen which also addresses, perhaps from a more commercial perspective, issues raised by Gladwell: *The Anatomy of Buzz: How to Create Word of Mouth Marketing* (Doubleday/Currency, 2000). It's very instructive regarding the points you raise.

Keep up the good work. I'll instruct my wife to forward the *Newsletter*, henceforth, in a more timely fashion!

Jon Sugarman

Dear Dr. Nash,

Your editorial was sensational – right on point (“A Health Care Tipping Point?”). The stickiness factor is especially important if we are ever going to get doctors to follow “guidelines” and avoid variability. Very thought provoking. I commend you.

Edward J. Saltzman, MD ('49)

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